



MARCH 2015 NEWSPAPER

POPE FRANCIS WILL BREAK BREAD WITH GAY, TRANSGENDER PRISONERS DURING PRISON VISIT

(RNS) When Pope Francis pays a visit to Naples this Saturday (March 21) he will have lunch with some 90 prisoners at a local prison, a contingent that will reportedly include 10 from a section reserved for gay and transgendered prisoners, and those infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

The stopover at the Giuseppe Salvia Detention Center in Poggioreale, near Naples, was originally not scheduled to include lunch, according to a report from Tv2000, an Italian television network operated by the country's Catholic bishops.

But the pope insisted on the meal, which will be prepared by the prisoners, some of whom will come from two other detention centers. The 90 were chosen by lottery from among 1,900 prisoners, according to the Vatican Insider website.

Among the many innovations Francis has made since his election two years ago this month has been a new tone and approach to gay and transgender people.

One of his signature phrases, "Who am I to judge?" came in response to a question about whether a gay man could be a priest. And in late January he met privately in the Vatican with a transgender man from Spain who had written to Francis about the rejection he was experiencing in his home parish.

Francis has made an outreach to detainees a signature part of his ministry to the "marginalized." On Holy Thursday next month, he will wash the feet of men and women inmates at a facility near Rome, as he did shortly after his election.

The lunch this Saturday will be very simple, even "frugal," because the pontiff wants to take time to meet each prisoner individually, Anna Maria Esposito, head of a prison ministry, told Vatican Radio.

The prison visit is part of a busy day for the pope in the sprawling Italian city 150 miles south of Rome.

Francis will begin by praying at a sanctuary in Pompeii — a town known for its Marian shrine, as well as a volcano — and he will go on to hold a series of events, including an outdoor Mass and meetings with young people and the sick before returning in the evening to the Vatican.

By David Gibson originally published on The Huffington Post March 20, 2015

REST IN PEACE AND POWER, ASHLEY

Ashley is a Black and Pink member that took her life on February 24th. We are sending love and support to all who knew Ashley and our community at large. We are publishing a letter of Ashley's that was originally in the July 2014 issue.



Dear Black & Pink,

Hello, I'm Ashley, one of several transgender inmates at my institution, a federal prison in Virginia. I am writing to share with everyone a long-awaited victory at our institution. After years of filing, and taking a case to court, four transgender inmates are now beginning hormone therapy, myself included! We consider this huge here because of their several years of repeated denials and stall tactics. I am also currently in litigation as to several issues, including the purchase and retention of female undergarments, purchase and retention of makeup through commissary or on SPO, and a prescription of Finasteride. One of the girls here is also battling for electrolysis. We all got started on 50mg of Spironolactone a day and 0.1 mg estrogen patches (Alora brand) twice a week. A couple of us have also seen victory in legally changing our names, myself included; now we are in the process of making it legal at our sentencing court and the BOP.

We want to publish this story to inspire everyone not to give up-- keep fighting; the war is far from over but this is a major battle won. Keep your heads up!

All my love,
Ashley, Virginia (Federal prison)

SEND US YOUR ART!

This month's header is by John in Indiana! Have your art featured in the Newspaper! We'll feature a different artist each month! Send us a drawing that says, "Black & Pink" or "Black and Pink" or "Poetry from the Heart" for the headers! Header art should be around the size of the newspaper header! Smaller or larger images may be resized to fit. You can send us other art too and we will include it in the poetry page.

Black and Pink
614 Columbia Rd
Dorchester, MA 02125

Return Service Requested

PRESORTED STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 1475

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2

A Message from Jason
On The Inside Conclusion
A Decade of Black and Pink
Black and Pink Hotline Number

Page 3, 4, 5, and 6

Letters to Our Family

Page 7

Poetry from the Heart

Page 8

Struggling for Rights

Does Trading Sex Define Who You Are?
Mugshots, Sex Offenders, and Public Shame
Prison Reform, Proposition 47, and the California
Shell Game

Page 9

Prison Reform, Proposition 47, and the California
Shell Game Continued

Black and Pink Family Feedback

Page 10

Prison Reform, Proposition 47, and the California
Shell Game Continued

3 Years of Torture is Enough: A Transgender
Prisoner Sues Georgia Prisons

Page 11

3 Years of Torture is Enough: A Transgender
Prisoner Sues Georgia Prisons Continued

Gender 101 Graphic

Calendar

Page 12

The Power Words List
Addresses

Statement of Purpose

Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and "free world" allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all races.

About this Newspaper

Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers have pulled together a monthly newspaper primarily composed of material written by our family's incarcerated members. In response to letters we receive, more prisoners receive the newspaper each issue!

This month, the newspaper is being sent to:
7,252 prisoners!

Disclaimer:

Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work. Everything published in the Newspaper is also on the internet—it can be seen by anyone with a computer. By sending a letter to "Newspaper Submissions," you are agreeing to have your piece in the Newspaper and on the internet. For this reason, we only publish First Names and State Location to respect people's privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our anti-oppression values and based on our Editing Guidelines.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!

Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new 'zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

A MESSAGE FROM JASON

Dear friends,

I hope this letter finds you as well as possible. I hope you do not mind too much that we run our newspaper on a funny schedule. As always, thank you for being patient with us. Thank you for continuing to reach out. Thank you for sharing information about Black and Pink with other prisoners. Thank you for your leadership. Many thanks to those of you who fill out the feedback form each month. Black and Pink is only possible as an effort because of you. I do know that it can be upsetting that we take long to respond to mail. Please know that this is only because we are an all volunteer organization, not because we do not care. We are always looking for new ways to increase the speed we respond to mail. We welcome ideas.

I need to take a moment to let you know about a death in our community. One of our Black and Pink members, Ashley Jean Arnold, took her life on February 24th. Ashley was a transgender woman, jail house lawyer, and activist at the federal prison in Petersburg, Virginia. Ashley spent much of her time fighting for access to gender affirming care. She fought not only for herself but for other prisoners. Prisoners at Petersburg were able to organize a memorial service on March 12th. At the service four other transgender women paid tribute to Ashley. As she was a Buddhist, there was time of honoring her life in traditional ways. Ashley's boyfriend also spoke at the service. We were told that over 200 prisoners attended her memorial service. This tragic loss of life brought together many people. It is in Ashley's memory, and the memory of so many other LGBTQ prisoners who have taken their lives, that we continue this work.

I want to honor that this is very hard news to hear. When we lose members of our community, even if we did not know them, it can be very painful to hear. I also want to celebrate those who got the information out about Ashley's death. Far too often the deaths of transgender women are never known or shared. Far too often the media hides these stories. Far too often the prison officials keep deaths of our family quiet. Two different prisoners at Petersburg reached out to Black and Pink to tell us what happened. These prisoners also reached out to other organizations and media to break the story. The prison has responded by giving them disciplinary tickets. One person has lost access to her corrlinks. This is the prison retaliating against prisoners for exposing the truth. We all know that the prison system would rather no one ever look behind the concrete and steel curtain. They want to abuse prisoners however they want without any accountability. Prisoner suicides are preventable. Prisoner suicides are really murder by the institution. The Bureau of Prisons needs to be held responsible for the death of Ashley Jean Arnold.

Dealing with feelings of suicide is not uncommon when locked up. Prison walls can create a lot of hopelessness. Racism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression make the day to day survival inside very difficult. A person who feels suicidal is not weak. A person who feels suicidal is not selfish. A person who feels suicidal is not a bad person. Unfortunately the prison system responds to suicidal feelings in really bad ways. No one who is feeling suicidal wants to be stripped of their clothes, placed in a paper johnny, and held in a solitary cell to be "eyeballed" by guards all day. The practices of "suicide watch" are not making anyone's mental health better. So what are ways that you can deal with your own feelings of suicide? What are ways you can support someone else who is feeling suicidal? Are there safer ways than telling prison staff? What coping resources do you have around you?

Some practices to try if you're feeling suicidal, or practices to share with a friend who is struggling, include: taking deep breaths, tightening every muscle in your body and then relaxing each muscle one at a time until the whole body is relaxed, listen to music, write down plans of things to do the next few days, massage your neck and the area behind your ears, and always be gentle with yourself. Surviving and fighting to get through each day can be very hard. Know that you are cared for and not alone. We keep this fight going knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving solidarity,
Jason

Page 2

ON THE INSIDE HAS CONCLUDED COLLECTING ARTWORK! THANK YOU ARTISTS!

The creators of On the Inside are incredibly grateful to the many artists (388!) who submitted their drawings, paintings and cards to be considered for the upcoming Exhibit! Hundreds of unique pieces, each expressing the artists' passion, perspective, and talent, were reviewed by the On the Insider curators. Unfortunately, not all pieces were able to be accepted. Given the significant volume of submissions, the On the Inside administrators are a little backed up with replying to everyone. Rest assured that all artwork that was received was logged into the database, along with artists' preference for compensation and how to handle declined artwork. Artist compensation was made a priority along with returning artwork. Everyone will receive a thorough response for the On the Inside team as the administrators work hard to catch up! Please see a sample of some of the incredible pieces that were accepted for final exhibit curation throughout the newspaper! Any art Postmarked after March 1st will no longer be considered" thank you all for your participation, but we can no longer accept art for the exhibit.

A DECADE OF BLACK AND PINK

Anyone who is being released between now and September, PLEASE send us your outside contact information. We are planning a big gathering in October 2015 to celebrate 10 years of Black and Pink. We will be having a big party on Friday night and a weekend long conference to plan the next steps for Black and Pink. We will be able to pay for travel, housing, and food of those who attend. We will also offer a stipend of \$150 to formerly incarcerated people who attend.

BLACK AND PINK HOTLINE NUMBER!!!

After over a year of thinking about how to make this happen we are now announcing that people can call us. The phone number is **617.519.4387**. Your calls will be answered as often as possible. We are not currently able to set up accounts, so calls must be either pre-paid or collect. The hotline will be available Sundays 1-5pm (Eastern Time) for certain. You can call at other times as well and we will do our best to answer your calls.

The purpose of the hotline is for 3 primary things:

1. Story telling. We are trying to collect stories of incarcerated members to turn into a recording that we can play at our 10 year anniversary celebration in October. Your voices are important to us and we want to make sure they are part of this event. We want to make time to record your story if you give us permission.
2. Supportive listening. Being in prison is lonely, as we all know. The hotline is here for supportive listening so you can just talk to someone about what is going on in your life.
3. Organizing. If there are things going on at your prison in terms of lock downs, guard harassment, resistance, and anything else that should be shared with the public, let us know so we can spread the word.

Restrictions:

The hotline is not a number to call about getting on the pen pal list or to get the newspaper.

The hotline is not a number to call for sexual or erotic chatting.

The hotline is not a number for getting help with your current court case, we are not legal experts.

We look forward to hearing from you! This is our first attempt at this so please be patient with us as we work it all out. We will not be able to answer every call, but we will do our best. **We apologize that our hotline is currently only available to those who can make pre-paid calls.** We will have the ability to accept collect calls very soon, again, our apologies.

My Black & Pink family,

I call you family not because it is a term loosely thrown around (as some might do); nor do I call you that because I have none & am starved for acceptance (though I do not have a family & am alone in this world); I, my friends, call you "family" because you understand me & what I've gone through, what I go through.

It's a horrible world in which we live; finding love, affection & hope is hard. I have gone so far to remind myself that there is love in the world by branding (i.e. burning) a butterfly into my arm. When I look at it, I try & remember my mom, the most beautiful person in the world (may the God she believes so devoutly in bless her & hold her safe). But the truth is it gets harder & harder day by day. I am a strong-minded individual but all the years alone behind these walls, all the barriers I've built so people can't hurt me anymore, is slowly breaking me. It's come to the point where all I look forward to is the void when I sleep & doing morphine or heroin. I don't even like to dream 'cause I never dream of the free world any more, only prison.

I first got locked up when I was 13. I went to California Youth Authority (kinda like child prison) when I was 15 & got out when I was 21. I was out for 6 months & then started coming to prison. I was in & out from 2005 till 2012. I'm now doing a 9-year sentence. You'd think that going in & out of prison isn't as bad as a longer sentence, but being "out" for a few months then getting locked up then getting out again completely alienates you from everyone you know. When you get out you start to build a friendship or relationship with an individual then you're ripped back to this world of concrete & steel & pulled away from that person. You do a short prison term or parole violation, find a good friend or a cool boyfriend & well, now your parole date's here & you never see them again. I have effectively been put in a vacuum. I must admit my world is lonely... but then it's been that way half my life.

I have known I was bisexual for a long time; I remember being kicked out of more than one group home for sexual activity with some of the other boys. My gender on the other hand has been somewhat of an enigma to me. I love pretty boys & trans women; I am a versatile bottom... all that's no mystery to me, all pretty cut and dry, but sometimes I want to be all masculine & tough... others I want to prance around in slutty clothes & act femme. I wish I could just be one way or the other.

I still to this day try to keep hope. I try my damnedest to be a good person. I do find some beautiful, honest people, yes, even in prison. Even though my world is bleak, I still hold to the hope that I will not always be lonely. It gets harder day by day to hold that faith, but the drugs numb & my strength perseveres so I still hold onto it. I try & bring good words & encouragement where I can. I may be hurt, even broken, but I know that I'm not the only lost soul out there & I hope to reach out to them.

I've been through a lot: incarcerated, raped as a child, burned by cigarettes; I've been shot, stabbed, beaten; I've been in riots; been kidnapped, duct taped, beaten & watched my best friend shot in the face with a .45 caliber handgun & all I can say is, yeah life REALLY f***ing sucks, but so far I've been able to keep something to look forward to. Sometimes a drawing I'm working on, or a really good book I'm reading or even a morphine pill for the next day... but truthfully I look forward to maybe getting to know my mom. To really stay out long enough to not just know the beautiful part I know, but to get to know ALL of her. The good, the bad, everything. There's ALWAYS hope, ALWAYS... I just hope I can always remember that. Pray for me, family.

Last thing I have to say is to my family member in the fed. First off, your name is SO cute! But really sweetie your letter touched me. I want you to know I don't judge you. What you've done in the past DOES NOT sum up the whole of your personality nor is it a measure of your character. You messed up & hurt some people but, love, we ALL hurt people & it's not fair to say your crimes are worse than mine. I can tell from your letter you're not a bad person... like me, you're just lonely & lost. Just remember when you're hurting the most, baby I'm thinking of you & right by your side, lonely too.

But not matter what, keep hope. Some day you'll meet someone like me who doesn't care about your charges & you'll love him & he'll love you. Nothing's forever baby boy, not even loneliness. You'll be in my prayers, beautiful.

To all my family, I love you, (and a shout-out to all my clowns LMFAO WHOOP! WHOOP!...word son...lol...hehe!), no but really,

Tommy, CA

Dear B&P family,

I've been receiving B&P for 5 months and I love the letters and support they give. So I decided to write myself.

I'm a 21-year-old bi trans woman and for the first time, I love myself. I say that because up until last year (Aug/Sep 2013) I've lived to be what those around me want me to be and never myself. Whether it was the chosen oldest or the scapegoat, my brother used me for his crimes against my other brothers. Every time I tried to be me I was sent to crazy doctors because I was rebelling and acting out of character or was told I was weird (still am).

But no more, I AM MY OWN PERSON: that is what I need to tell you my brothers and sisters. YOU ARE YOUR OWN PERSON. Don't let family, friends, guards, mental health [practitioners], inmates, or anyone tell you who you are. So keep your heads up, family. It gets better but only you can make it that way.

I've had my share of triumphs, legally changing my name and discovering who I am, and I've had my downers, the people not recognizing and inmates' disrespect, but I keep my head up and plow through. There are a

great many things I haven't done (or have done) that I wish with all my heart and soul I should have done (or not have done). But life is full of choices and we have to make them and the one choice we need to make is to be ourselves and not let others dictate who, what, when, where, how, and why. I wish all of you the best and hope you find your road.

In love and understanding,
Michelle

Dear Black and Pink family,

I am new to the B&P family so let me tell you a little about me. I am a trans woman who is trying to re-transition. Let me explain. I was arrested in a state (in 2002) that was anti-transgender, well actually they were anti-LGBT! At the time of my arrest I was ten days away from starting hormone therapy. There was NO one in the state on hormones (they said). I was in three of the six prisons and I never saw any other girls!

In ten years I gained 150 pounds, cut myself 35 times, and attempted suicide 12 times, because they were forcing me to live as someone who I am NOT. They were trying to steal my true identity! In this time they also forced me to take up to six mental health medications at one time. And I've NEVER been on these kinds of meds before. They wouldn't even contact my psychiatrist on the streets. But the good news is now that I'm in this state I will be able to transition! Plus this prison has a lot of LGBT staff and that helps. My doctors actually looked into my outside records and found out I really did have a GID diagnosis and they do NOT make me take any medication I do NOT want to take! And they are pushing the higher-ups to approve me extra things for my transition. Doesn't mean I'll get them, but it's nice to have people care and stand up for me finally! Since coming to this prison I have lost 100 pounds, with NO more cutting or suicide attempts. All in all, I'm much happier with transition day getting closer. I see the specialist in a few months.

Before I close I would like to respond to a letter from the October/November issue. The letter touched my heart very much! Like the person who wrote it, I was also physically, mentally, and emotionally abused by my so-called "mom" and also my step-"dad." And was brutally raped by a family member. So I can understand SOME of what she went through. Yet through it all she is still smiling and that makes me smile! I am so sorry to hear that she is in a max unit until 2018. That must be so hard on her; I hope she keeps her head up and keeps smiling! I will be keeping her in my prayers and think of her daily.

In closing, I say thank you to the Black and Pink family, my real "family"! Your letters of love, strength, and courage are an inspiration to me! I love you all!!!

In love and solidarity,
Jessica, CA

The sex offender registry is something that might have been conceived with the purest of intentions, but is something that is now rapidly becoming a tool of darkness. This glorified mark list, or hit list, if you will, is just as accessible by the average housewife as it is by someone with malevolent desires. Enter the hate crimes and suffering caused by this list. Do we really need to create more victims?

Will my past iniquities, and future life as a registered sex offender, create more victims because of this list?

Today my bunkmate received harrowing news concerning his daughter who resides on the east coast. Apparently his fourteen year old daughter's peers found out that her dad is a registered sex offender in prison. This man, this inmate who is in the process of reentering society soon, completed his therapy and served his time. Now, his family is still suffering because of this list. His daughter ceased going to school because of the torment of hearing her father being called a child molester. This man whom I choose to call my friend is no molester.

True, our actions inevitably sent us to this place of concrete and tears, but does the government really need to help us create more secondary victims? Didn't we do a good enough job on our own? How many hate crimes will it take for our lawmakers to see the personal rights travesty that is the Sex Offender Registry?

Jason, UT

To my Black & Pink family,

This is in regards to Jennifer Gann and her ACT campaign. I have tried to make changes here at CMF. It has been done with no help from any of the other transgender people. In this prison we have a transgender group that meets as well as a LGBT friendly group for anyone as long as they sign a contract and abide by it. We have around 10 transgender people, but none try to make change. But I am doing a little at a time. I still am a positive role model for the girls.

Recently I did a 602 for a mammogram. I had 2 done here in 2009 & 2010. And tried to get it done every year since, with no results. It wasn't until I did the 602 that another mammogram was granted at the first level. Of which I've already had done, with a result of a good check-up. Those of you girls who are over 40 or have implants should request a mammogram from your PCP in Helemedicine doctor. Do not be afraid to do a 602 if you have to.

Now I am working on my name change so I can get married soon to my husband of 6 years on the outside. I stated in my 602 that it would make no sense to be a transgender person who has lived as a female for 40 years, to then marry a man and keep a name given to me by my parents. But I also stated

having male genitalia doesn't make you a man. And the expectation that just because I am in a male prison, I should act like a man. The 602 was denied on 7/6/14 at the first level by the Associate Warden saying it would complicate my identification during incarceration. It already complicates that when I have ignorant staff calling me Sir, or Mr. I've sent the 602 on to the Warden stating you can't deny a name change based on general concerns about confusions in the records. The fight continues.

So to all the trans women we can make change only if we try, even if nobody wants to help you. Do not give up for what you believe in. And remember, there is nothing strange about us. It's only strange what we have to go through.

I love you all and please stand up with Ms. Jennifer.

Love,
Lisa, CA

First and foremost, let me start this letter off with, Wow! I have not read any newspaper so open. I am currently incarcerated in Washington. I've finished 18 years. I have 5 years left and am 36 years old. This is my first letter and time reading.

I would like to start out with a response to a submission in the September 2014 newspaper and about someone's celly and the outcome of the situation. I am glad he found what he liked, but at the same time, his celly was wrong for what he did.

I've been in prison since I was 18 years old. Everyone heard of Walla Walla. Right, well, I have a similar story. I had a celly tossing hints around "sex playing." I didn't mind..but I was young and had a big reputation to hold and build. The car I rode with would have sent missions on me if they knew, so I kept it real quiet. You know what I mean? We had open showers and my celly would always stay by me. He walked the yard, got me into doing bar work and at the same time would get me high. It was cool, until our other two cellies went to work and he asked if I thought he was cool. I jumped down off my bunk and said, "Yeah... Why?" He kissed me... I was surprised. He was 25 years old, cut in, 185 pounds. I was small, 150 pounds, 5'9". He was already established at the pen. After the kiss, I smiled and said, "Whoa! What's up?" Which led to him hugging me. I said our cellies will be back... He didn't stop. Things only progressed. I performed oral sex on him...which I enjoyed. Then he asked if he could perform oral sex on me... I thought ok. That means we're equal. I kept that a secret for 18 years...until I read this newspaper. Yes, I have had other encounters, some bad and some awesome. But I still keep it a big secret because of the car I ride with. My family doesn't even know because I have family members in prison with important names to them.

Thank you to anyone with similar stories, I felt a lot of weight lift off me. So to everyone please stay strong...much love.

S.B., WA

Greetings my dear friends & family of Black & Pink!

You may call me "Freckles." I'm warehoused in the Texas Dept of..."Corruptions." That's right! I can hardly contain my anguish of all the prejudices and injustices that many suffer at their hands.

This is my first time writing, but I no longer wish to carry my burden alone. In my 17 years, I've encountered and witnessed much oppression and wrong-doing that many of you have from incarceration.

I'm a bi female and try very hard to stay off security's radar but have been subject of many attacks for my sexual preference. I abide by all rules set before me by this institution.

However I was not informed that I'm not to be happy and make the most of my situation. The system thrives on dysfunction by condoning drama and condemning/harassing functional relationships.

I was in a very happy and committed relationship (breaking no rules) for 2.5 years. The system saw fit separating us with unit transfers - by doing so, my heart was broken and our relationship destroyed.

I was court sentenced to do time; not to be punished, harassed and retaliated against. You (and I) can abide by all the rules and still get messed with!

You, my brothers and sisters, aren't alone!

I noticed a fellow offender get her cubicle searched while she was at work. This officer is known to pick and rummage through cubicles not occupied for compliance check.

It's blatantly obvious how racism & personal prejudices manifest by which & whom and how she searches. Many undergo unnecessary damages to personal property, confiscation or careless neglect, by leaving things out to be stolen while others are overlooked or treated carefully. This is not only frustrating, it's disheartening. Our family's hard earned money going to waste - but the greatest complaint is we are seldom in a position to win. The odds are against us.

This is Texas! The good ol' boy state. We often fight a losing battle. Why? If we try and form our grievances, we subject ourselves to more trouble. Be sure to pick your battles wisely. It's an everybody knows everybody system. If they can't retaliate and getcha themselves, they'll have their mother-brother-sister-cousin-friend... to do it for them.

We have to pull together, my family & friends. For no (wo)man is an island! These small acts grow to bigger and larger ones when deaf ears and blind eyes tend to ignore. Gather together and allow your voices to be heard. There's power in numbers! Let us strive for fairness and equality!

Allow no one to struggle alone. So note it be -
Blessings to all,
Freckles, TX

Hellow how is the family doing? Well your brother is alright. My name is Anthony but everybody calls me Antbang. I'm in prison in Ohio and I'm a bisexual male. This is my first time writing an article to the B&P family. First off I want to send much love to my LGBTQ brothers and sisters and everyone who supports us.

I've known I'm bisexual since I was 12 year old, I didn't come out of the closet until I was 18 years old. At first people didn't accept it, I learned how to block out the people hating on me. There's always someone trying to bring me down. When I was 12 year old I turned to the street and started selling drugs, and carrying firearms. I also started to gang bang and hurt people to block out my pain inside. It didn't really hit me until later in life what my actions were doing.

I faced death at age 22 year old after being shot by the police and charged with 5 counts of murder. I had no choice but to really see things for what they were. I had made my bed, it was time to lay in it. I was blessed to only get 20 years for 2 counts of manslaughter.

Since I've been locked up I've witnessed the abuse and harassment that gay and transexual people go through. I witnessed people in the prison system shed nothing but darkness on our LGBTQ community. I matured over the years, I used to be wild and full of violence. I am not the flamboyant type but I love the flamboyant type. They don't understand the pressure we face every day.

All my LGBTQ community, stay strong.
Much love!
Anthony, Ohio

Dear Black and Pink Family

Hello to all of my Brothers are Sisters out there, this is your big sister Phoebe from the inside here in Oklahoma. And I would like to share with you this story that I never thought could happen to me, but it did, just last week.

This officer came in my cell putting on his shake-down gloves on. He pat searched one of my cellmates, and kicked him out of the cell. He did the same to another cellmate before he pat searched my 78 year old cellmate and kicked her out of the cell. He then strip searched me. He told me to leave on my panties and T-shirt and then said "lift up your shirt", and then "lift up your bra and show me your boobs" (I have a 'B' cup almost a 'C' cup), he then took my bra.

I went to try to get it back, but it was no where to be found. It didn't go in the trash and it did not go to contraband. So where did it go? I bet he took it home with him. Two days after the encounter I told my transgender counselor and she reported it for me. But he is still here, but hopefully after the IA interviews us, he will get escorted off this yard.

My message to you other girls out there behind the walls is, if this happens to you report it, and fast. Don't let these sleazy guards sexually harass you in anyway, we should not have to put up with this shit at all.

I love all of you ladies, us girls have to stick together no matter what.

Blessed be my children,
I love you all,
Ms. Phoebe, Oklahoma
XOXOXOX

Hello everyone,

This is my first letter and not the last. My name is Josh but you can call me Kiba (pronounced kee-ba). I am 29 yrs old and Gay. I am in love with a wonderful man, who we will call Koinu, for privacy. We met here in a Washington correctional center about a year ago and quickly became friends. We grew close over time and I confessed my love for him. He feels the same for me. After about 9 months I asked for his hand in marriage, he said yes. Now, we know we can't until he gets out. So we will continue to build our relationship.

The staff here soon noticed our affection and started to harass us. I've filed complaints to no avail. It's hard for us here because he is in another unit, but we see each other at Chow and Religious services. It was all fine until we had physical relations (oral sex) and someone told on us. Now we sit in the hole.

I'm trying to build a lawsuit for all the discrimination by DOC. It's going slow.

So, I love reading all the letters and love the poems, my new favorite is: Beautiful by Imani. It describes exactly how I feel about Koinu. Your letters make me so happy here to know there are others like Kionu and me. I will write again soon.

Your Brother, Kiba, WA

Black & Pink,

Hello my friends. I have to say that this is my first letter to the family. I have been reading the newsletter for a couple of months now and have to say I really enjoy what I read. I have been locked up for 13 years now and most of that has been in solitary confinement. I can relate to the constant struggle against ignorance, stupidity, and violence. Especially being who I choose to be within the LGBTQ community. I am Bisexual and have been for my whole life. There is a saying I like to share with people that already have "preconceived notions" toward the lifestyles we choose.

People don't wake up one day thinking: "well I guess I will be homosexual for the rest of my life!" It's not usually a conscious decision to change either/or. We all develop in different ways and our preference to any lifestyle is our choice. You don't see the average person waking up one day saying "Hey, I'm going to be heterosexual, nothing else!" It's just in that person to become who he or she is meant to be.

So why then do we live to fight so hard to assert ourselves and our beliefs? Well, I can say that what is right is not always accepted for such. We have a history of suppression in this country. Suppression of sex and everything tied to it. Look back 40 even 50 years ago. In television it was deemed "wrong, bad, or uncivilized" to show a man and woman in bed together. That was suppression! We are going through a revolution here in this country. It's not "wrong" or "ungodly" to be who you are meant to be. The "civilized" majority will soon realize that they are not doing anything but harm to their fellow people. We will always stand up for what we believe is right, but don't close your mind to other possibilities. That's wrong in itself. I have become who I am and nobody (community, church or government) can tell me that it's "wrong" to be who I am. We must fight and keep ourselves close together. We can't stop until there is equality for all of us no matter what your lifestyle may be.

I want to say to the family at Black and Pink to stick together and stay strong. We have plenty of battles to come and unity in our cause is our strongest ally. Keep spreading understanding and keep writing us throughout the country. Keep us in touch and remain steadfast. My heart and love goes out to each and every one of ya'll. Just remember that as long as we have opposition there will always be an opportunity to stand up and say "yes, I am Black and Pink"!

Chad, GA

Dear Black and Pink Family,

My name is Westley. I am from Detroit, Michigan. I am GAY. Currently I am incarcerated in a Michigan Prison and I have about 4 years left until I go home. I am 20 years old.

I was extremely pleased to obtain my first Black and Pink Newspaper (April 2014.) I am a big fan of the entire LGBT community. I have been gay for as long as I remember.

Sadly I had an abusive childhood and eventually I left home due to me not feeling safe. The abuse and beating and emotional and mental abuse got to be very overwhelming in the house and I unfortunately resorted to criminal activity at the age of 18.

Since being in prison things have been very challenging for me. I have no family support neither do I have friends. I am truly all alone. I often must endure sexual abuse from other prisoners and often times I am harassed by prison staff.

Sadly in 2013 a former prison employee sexually assaulted me. The sexual assault was very traumatic to me and still to this day I have nightmares about it and I often and very afraid of prison staff and other prisoners. Currently the sexual assault is being litigated in federal court. I have a great attorney, actually several attorneys, who are representing me pro bono in the lawsuit.

Due to prison staff being aware of the lawsuit in addition to me being openly gay and vocal about civil rights violations, I am often targeted and harassed and retaliated against by prison staff. For example my room is constantly ransacked, and I am called demeaning names, also I am issued frivolous misconduct tickets....etc.

However, I am a master at remaining positive. Even though I have nothing and no one; I have myself and my Black and Pink Family.

I strive to think about the fact that one day I will be released from prison and I will be able to be a productive gay citizen. I strive to treat others how I would want to be treated regardless of how they may treat me. Also I always say to myself that regardless of what may occur that I must remain strong!

I am sure I am not the only homosexual going through harassment and retaliation, so I would like to encourage my fellow LGBTQ family members to remain strong and not to let anyone or anything discourage you from being the best person you can be.

With love,

Westley aka Paris, MI

Hey Everyone,

First time writing and I have a lot to say. But first some knowledge about myself. I am a 31-year-old gay male. Just had my birthday in December. I came out when I was 13 years old. Even though my family accepts me, they never talk about my sexuality. But I am okay with that! Upon my arrival in prison, I was immediately put in general population. Two weeks later, I started to experience disrespect from the guards. I recently filed a lawsuit against 15 employees at this penitentiary for the abuse I have been through. Because the damage has already been done, I am seeking \$1 million and will not settle outside of court. I have nine claims, but the one that hurts the most is...

In May 2014, I was depressed because of how I was being treated. I pushed the "emergency call" button located in my cell and told the CO that he needed to talk to someone because I was feeling suicidal. I waited for over half an hour and no one came. I then made a noose and hung myself. When the guards found me, it was four minutes later. I was rushed to the ER. The doctor told me that it's a miracle that I'm still alive. When the doctor okayed me to leave the hospital, I was brought back to the penitentiary and put in an observation cell. The cell was very cold. The only things given to me was a worn-out, flat mattress and a suicide safety gown. The safety gown is like a dress without sleeves. They took all of my clothing. For five days I was deprived of hygiene, toilet paper, showers, pillow, blanket, and clothing. Every night I woke up with cold and sore bones, a runny nose and chattering teeth. When I asked for the suicide safety blanket, I was denied. I was denied everything that I should have been able to have. I didn't even have anything to wipe with. I won't even try to explain how it worked, use your imagination if you want some idea. At one point I blacked out, fell over and busted my head off the concrete floor leaving an open wound on my head. The blood was never cleaned up and no testing was

done to see why I blacked out. I had to live like a pig for five days. I even had to eat hot food with my fingers. And considering I had no toilet paper, and no bar of soap, you can't even imagine how gross it was to eat with my fingers. The best part about this claim, is that I have evidence and witnesses of how I was treated. More on me later...

I would like to address some of the articles in the October and November 2014 issue of Black and Pink. I have a bit to say about the article on "Justice for Nate" that really upsets me... I've never experienced a hate crime like Nate has, but I can feel for him. I decided that I want to join the "Justice for Nate" campaign. Instead of spending money on commissary, I'm going to send some money to the campaign. I pray that Nate will get his turn at justice. In response to the article from Jeff in Illinois, I just want him to know that he seems to be in the right place mentally. You're right Jeff! It does not matter what other people think. Everyone lives by a code. If that code is to judge others, than they have a virus. One that will one day ruin their life. I once used to judge people... I found the perfect person and fell in love with him. But I lost him because I judged his family. I then fell in love with someone else and again lost him because I judged him for something he was not doing. So, judging others is a virus and no longer is a part of me. Another thing is that when I was nine, I experienced a brutal sexual abuse. I was raped by five guys (adults) one after the other. I hated myself for a long time and had blamed those men. But in reality I was only angry. You cannot make a person hate themselves. If they can't find any good in themselves left, then either they had a crappy life or they are not digging deep enough. I'm not saying what you did is right. I'm just letting you know that it's time to put the past behind you and move forward. Stay strong Jeff!

In response to <3 Eugeny a.k.a. Lil' Russia, Utah, I admire you. Living on your own since you were 13. That takes a lot of strength and skill. Just remember, if you can survive that, then you can survive anything. Stay strong Lil' Russia!

In response to Justin from Pennsylvania. I find you interesting. They say you can tell a man by his writing... I'm not sure if my feelings are correct, but your writing has given me a sense of love for you. I could see us being good friends. You are an honest and strong person. I am sorry that your mother rejected you. Not to be mean, but people who are really religious tend to forget what God is about. She needs to understand that God wants us to forgive and love one another. She should not judge you. For God says: "those who judge will be judged. For they will not enter the heavens and have not eternal life." I am not very religious, but I do own a Bible. I'm still searching for my spiritual path. Don't give up hope, one day your mother will realize where she went wrong and beg for your forgiveness. Everything takes time. Be strong my friend!

For all the others who read this paper, I want you all to know that you have my support and love. If any of you want to be a friend to me, I get out on December 1, 2017. Take care and stay strong!

Love always,
Travis W,
North Dakota

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

LGBTQ Struggle! Power to all the Blacks and the Pinks! I love you all. This is Ms. Angel coming to you from Southern Nevada.

I write this letter to all my family in Protective Custody/Segregation - wherever you may be, my heart goes out to you. Whatever your reason being in PC/PS, listen to me - that's for YOU to know. That's right. It is your business and nobody else's. Whether you tell other people why you're housed in PC/PS, the bottom line is, nobody needs to know. Just because it's PC, it sure as hell don't mean it's safe for you now. It's like the breeding ground for "snitches". You've got more of a chance that you will be told on. What you did on the GP yard to come to PC, or at other PC yards, or even how you compromised a staff member to get out of a write-up. Listen to me, people. It is not guaranteed that what you say will be safe and kept confidential - even if it is to a person or a group of people you trust. Not only that, this also happens in GP - it's everywhere.

I'm saying this because it reminded me of what a person wrote in the June 2014 issue - there is no unity. And that is a very sad truth. I'm saying this from personal experience, until recently (D & Diamond, I love you both, you are my two sisters I've never had) all the other yards I been, the girls don't stick together. And I can't believe it.

If all these "men" give us s*** & our sisters don't stick together, what the hell? Who will have our backs then? It just doesn't make sense. What doesn't make more sense is that when our brothers and sisters get locked up - jail or prison - they think they must hide. That is total bogus! There is no need to hide or be afraid. We are still free to be "us" in jail or prison. Who does need to be afraid is the other people who think they can attack or prey on us, because those of us who will stand up for our family will not hesitate to attack back. Like someone said recently "When [we] touch, [we] touch hard." (So true.) We should never underestimate the power we have hidden within ourselves. I want to say to my family who are still hiding or are afraid: don't be, because now is the time to embrace who you really are and be free to be you. You'd be surprised by those around you who're family and will love you for WHO you are - not WHAT you are - not like how some of these "men" see us. And don't go jumping to look for a man (or a queen) either. Give it some time. Feel them out first, make sure to know where their head is (& I ain't talking about the one in their pants.)

My Brothers and Sisters, if we are to fight this system, the oppressing beast, we must have unity. We can't just fight together & then go our separate ways. NO! We must have unity all the time, everywhere. Not only that, we must have and show love, compassion, trust, loyalty and sincerity within ourselves (first) and with others. Without unity, nothing will be done, nothing will be accomplished.

Everything that I've just said is only from experience and what I've witnessed. It is only my opinion, which means you don't have to agree with me. But in the event that you do, let me ask you this: What are you going to do to change the circumstances around you (in relation to what I've just written)? How are you going to bring around unity?

The fight may be hard but we are stronger! To all who have a faith, don't ever let the fire go out - stand firm in your belief. Keep your heads held high and be strong. It's die or ride and I'm riding! Who's with me?

I love you all, my heart goes out to all and each every one of you - wherever you may be. God bless you all and Blessed Be.

In Deepest Solidarity Love,
Angel, Nevada

[Editor's Note: Angel had some shout outs which we had to remove. We do not publish other prisoner's names to prevent the Newspaper from being rejected.]

Blessed Be B&P family,

Hi, I'm Max! I am a 24-year-old gay boy from Kentucky, even though I'm currently incarcerated in Ohio. In all the newspapers I've gotten for the past year since November 2013, I've read every bit of it and am astounded with everybody's experiences and stories and how brave these individuals are. I wanna be that brave and I'm in need of support from my Black and Pink family. So I wanna support you all to know that you are not alone, and I wanna know that I'm not alone.

I have had a rough childhood that led me to getting locked up. I've suffered criticism and bullying as a child. When I was nine years old is when I found out I was gay. I was put back in diapers at seven because I was bedwetting and pooping in my pants at night. My cousin stayed over at my house one night who was only 13 months younger than me. It was when I asked him to change me that night that I realized I was gay, because it felt really nice when he gave me an enema to me that I had him touching me. That being said is what led to my offense four years ago. For a long time I was spanked with a belt, given enemas, and was put in diapers, mainly Huggies and Goodnites, 24/7 as a kid and being changed by my cousin and my brother a lot that turned me gay. I liked it. The reason for me being in diapers was a medical problem that has not ceased and for the longest time as a kid to now, I was in hiding for being gay. But it was when I was being bullied and was under peer pressure and hazing is when I started going downhill. I started looking for other diaper kids to talk to and would build a collection of pictures of them, just so I wouldn't feel alone. When I was 13, I needed diapers and couldn't figure out a way to buy them or tell my mom, so I stole them and almost got caught. That's when I should've realized I need to talk to somebody about this. I tried to talk to my brother, but he thought I was a freak. My cousin knew, but it was then that we weren't talking. So it had to be my mom. Yeah, I didn't tell my mom that I needed them again until I was 19 going on 20.

It was only after I committed my instant offense of possession of child porn that landed me here because I couldn't find somebody who would listen to me.

And now, here I am sitting in prison, suffering from PTSD from a sexual assault and the physical assault that left me permanently messed up. I've suffered mental and physical injuries and now I'm having even more trouble with medical here. And now I'm having accidents like crazy and they won't give me diapers to wear because the government put all that information in my PSI and they saw it as a sexual kink rather than a medical need even though there is witness and doctor notes that state the problems that I've had and the need for diapers is warranted.

Yes, I'm gay and yes I've messed up my life, but you can't deny medical care for any reason nor tell me if I'm too young or too old for diapers. This is my struggle and I've given up all hope on fighting this. I don't know how to go about beating this struggle. I filled it up to BP-9 to the warden and they want to refer me to psychology. I don't know what to do. But I do know what I am going to do. I plan on being a Black and Pink member for life. I have six more years in federal prison from an 11 year sentence, once I'm out, I'll help from the outside, but until then, I can help through my letters and drawings and try to support through them when I can and I hope to have support from all my family as well. But until next time, be safe and stay strong.

Blessed be,
Maximus E, Ohio

Black and Pink,

Thank you for my first newsletter, and for giving unto our family an outlet of expression, and the opportunity to become a natural part of this United "grander identity" that is larger than our personal, limited, and disconnected perspectives.

My name is Vance, and I am a bisexual male from New York City, LOL. I have spent the last 23 years within the Georgia penal industry... Wow! The question most commonly asked of me is - how did I make it this far? In other words how did I do it??

For starters, it hasn't been an easy climb over the mountainous opposition that stands between the LGBTQ community and this "Bible Belt country"

in which we live, and yet are persistent determinism to rise beyond the chaos is winning over our long-sought after respect.

However, in response to a question asked of me - I did it trustingly, courageously, positively, lovingly and optimistically one day at a time. In my deep seated knowledge of the reality of a higher power that sincerely loves me. This higher power has always made it clear to me that I was not going through life alone, regardless of the biblical writers who would like us to believe that God perceives gay people as abominations!

To Billy of Arizona, and to the LGBTQ family nationwide; I suggest that this momentary "timeout" from our lives should be spent productively and positively. Time is precious, rare and should be perceived as an opportunity for us to spend quality time with ourselves in a way that we didn't have time for while caught up in society, by society, and all the pitfalls and traps that the unaware stumble into that leads to an early grave.

The only thing you really have that you can call your own is how you choose to perceive and experience this little "timeout." Your attitude is everything, and your attitude in relation to this challenging life we live will determine how you choose to deal with life or prison. Knowledge is power...

What if, just for this moment, you choose to treat all people respectfully and honestly-just because that is how you would like to be treated? What if, you choose to portray yourself to all others as someone caring and loving-just because you know that this is how you would like to feel? And what if you choose during this moment, to ignore the taunts and jeers of others - knowing that they are wounded and hurting themselves? What if, just for this moment you step outside of your fears and allow the true "rainbow Bright You" to shine forth and enrich the lives of others? You can try this just for this momentary "timeout," and discover how it feels to wear these new feelings. You may find that you truly like the new you and certainly those around you will feel, sense and notice your difference. My "timeout" began my personal journey toward self-understanding and self-appreciation. To turn back to self-doubt and self-recrimination is to return to the pain and misery suffered by so many. That too is a choice. Is God real? Ask and we shall receive. If life is a bed of roses, and you're happy with the way that you are doing life, or doing time, then you probably don't wish to change your perspective. But if things are less than perfect, and you desire to experience better, perhaps this is something that you might wish to try on just to see how you can create a more joyful reality for yourself and those around us.

I sincerely love my family and I know that we are all some very beautiful and gifted souls. We are bundles of joy and understanding; we are walking rainbows in the lives of everyone; we are all masters in the making... Keep your heads up and keep smiling always...

One love and solidarity,
Vancina, GA
Fam in the struggle

Black and Pink family,

For the last two months I've been reading some of the letters, stories, and poems in the Black and Pink newspaper. I sent my request to subscribe to the paper, but have been reading another inmate's copy. In some of the letters and poetry, and even in people I've met face-to-face, people are going through some of the religious animosity brought on by some misinformed Christians. Don't get me wrong I am not saying Christianity is misleading or misinforming. I myself am a Christian. An Episcopalian to be more exact.

What I am saying is that before you allow yourself to feel condemned, get more informed. There is a book titled "God Believes in Love" and is by Gene Robinson who is an openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church. See, the New Testament was originally written in Greek. Gene Robinson will take you through those New Testament verses that people "claim" to condemn homosexuality.

Gene Robinson had presented his findings to the Council of the Episcopalian church. It resulted in the acceptance of gays and lesbians in the church. And the support of same-sex marriage. And just because you want to be a good Christian does not mean that you have to turn straight. ALWAYS FORWARD, NEVER STRAIGHT!

After reading the book you can decide for yourselves about your faith and sexuality. Pass the info to your friends and family said they also can learn. You can probably find the book at any Episcopal bookstore, maybe some other bookstores. If you don't have anywhere else to buy or find the book, here is the address of an Episcopal bookstore in Seattle, Washington: Episcopal Bookstore, 3837 Stone Way N., Seattle, WA 98103

Keep your heads up! Don't lose faith!
Sincerely,
Brandon in Idaho

THE LIGHT BENEATH THE DARKNESS

As the shadow consumes my body
 The evil seeps into my pores
 The hate consumes the mind
 While death seems like a joy
 I strive to catch my breath
 While drowning on the fear
 I try to search for hope
 Only to see the shadows reach for me
 I swing & punch only to become more ensnared
 I lash out with all my might
 Only to be smothered out like a dying ember
 I twist & fall down a bottomless pit
 Then I search within
 I feel the tiny void inside
 As I crawl
 Searching out to reach it
 I gaze upon the cocoon
 As I reach out to touch it
 The shell of darkness cracks
 Fissures spiral everywhere then explode
 To reveal what's always been there
 The light within me
 Destroying all the hate, pain & fear
 To embrace the glorious light
 That has always been me

Brian AKA Body, NC

As I sit here thinking of you,
 I don't know what to say.
 Please god don't take his love away,
 I need him in more than one way.

I try to tell you what you mean to me,
 But it's like you keep running further
 and further away from me.

He's the sparkle in my eye,
 can't he just see,
 Just what his love means to me!

I understand that you are scared and can't be one with me. But that doesn't mean that you gotta avoid me.

I honestly hope that you will open your eyes and mind to see the true me. I've got so much to offer to you, But But I can't stand there and let you walk away from me.

So closing this poem, Please take the time and think about what we share before closing the door, and leaving me standing breathless and alone. Because I really love you and need you with me.

Scott, PA

STORMS COME AND GO

Storms come and go,
 I went up and down
 all through the pain
 but at the end,
 storms come and go.

Life is hard to even try
 to remain still, you
 feel as if there no where
 to go and still,
 storms come and go.

I live 31 years on God's
 great earth and never once
 did I go, at the
 very end all remains the same,
 storms come and go.

I AM...

Why can't you love me for who I am?
 What is so wrong with not wanting a man?
 I can't change it, but not that I would,
 I'd just make you love me, if I thought that you could
 I'm not a bad person, I just am, who I am,
 Sorry I'm not the perfect little lamb.
 I know in your eyes, I didn't turn out right
 now you cast me into the blackness of the night.
 I've wrestled with this for too long, but I'm older now
 and I know my feelings and desires aren't wrong.
 I tried so hard to please you, to make you proud, but
 it is too much that I stand out in a crowd.
 I wish you could see what you're like, so damn phony,
 thank God I'm not like you; miserable and lonely.
 I live outside the box, which is what you can't take,
 and these feelings of disgust are something neither of us can shake.
 Well, I guess I am like you in a sense,
 I too despise all "your" ways, and I refuse to be condensed.
 So it's for the best we live how we do,
 because I'll never again change myself to make other people happy,
 especially you!

Karen, AL

LIFESTYLE

Who said that this lifestyle
 does not breed thugs?
 Who said this lifestyle
 doesn't give love?
 Well, I'm here to inform you
 that they were lying to you!

Daddy's a felon,
 Mommy's a prostitute.
 So what am I?

Well, I am a man of the struggle.
 A boy that has dealt with the confusion,
 of who I like, and what I want,
 and you don't have to like me, if you don't.

So don't pretend,
 Because I'll be happy if you are,
 or not my friend.

Ain't no skeletons in this closet,
 Because I cleaned it all out,
 and placed it onto the street,
 for this entire nosy world to see.

So do you, or do you not like me?
 Because, I will not tolerate foul words,
 I'm gay, because I'm happy, and free as a bird.

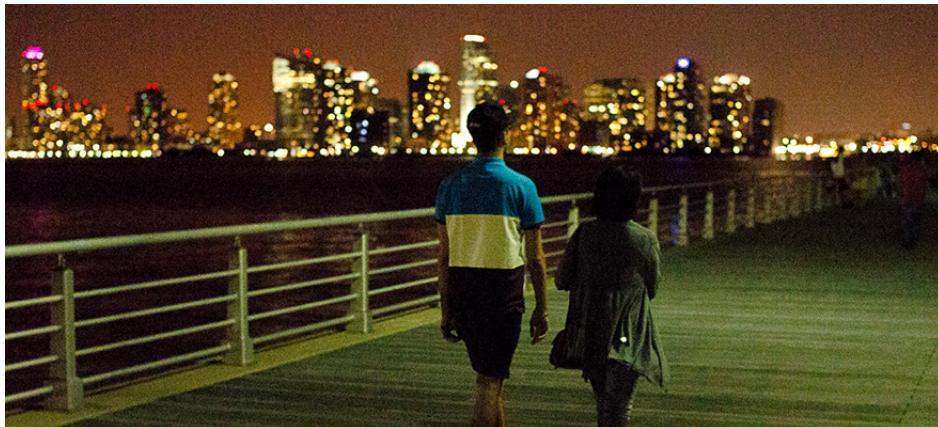
And if you don't like me...
 well I know an entire familia
 that loves me.

So you don't dim my days, or darken my nights,
 I'm still with LGBTQ for life!

Quadre, IL

Brielle, LA

DOES TRADING SEX DEFINE WHO YOU ARE?



In our recently released study, "Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex," Urban Institute researchers trained youth from Streetwise and Safe to interview young people about their experiences engaging in survival sex. The lead youth researcher, Mitchyll Mora, offered to share his perspective on working on the project and the importance of the study.

The "Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ youth, YMSM, and YWSW Engaged in Survival Sex" study is unlike others because the majority of the 300 interviews were conducted by young people who either had experiences engaging in survival sex, like me, or were in the community with youth who did.

Do you feel that trading sex defines who you are?

Nearly every time I asked an interviewee this question, I would ask myself too. "Do I feel that trading sex defines me?" More often than not I'd answer, "Yeah, it does."

But this wasn't true for 85 percent of the youth we interviewed. "No, it does not define me" was a common response, and while that might not feel true for me all the time, I do get it. Youth who are or have engaged in survival sex live large lives, filled with all kinds of pain and joy and resilience.

We can define ourselves.

So, this research team didn't attempt to define experiences for the youth we interviewed. We didn't create identities for them. This is reflected in the language we used. By having youth like me doing the interviews, we created an environment that allowed for nuance of the experiences being shared. They knew that I knew that engaging in survival sex wasn't the only thing that has ever happened in their lives. That it's complicated.

Overwhelmingly, youth expressed a desire to stop trading sex. In fact, 67 percent of youth reported that they wanted to stop, 5 percent said they wanted to stop immediately, and 21 percent said they had already stopped.

These same young people also reported that they didn't have access to the housing that they needed, with 48 percent reporting living in a shelter and another 10 percent saying they lived on the street. This is one example of the way needs inform whether or not youth will trade sex to survive.

I hope that "Surviving the Streets of New York" will add complexity to a narrative that often reduces us to a specific set of experiences. I hope it prompts readers to look at the totality of our lives. In so doing, we can begin to create responses and support systems that are based in the realities of youth's lives.

When a young person says that their family isn't safe, that foster care isn't safe, that they aren't safe in police custody or at the shelter, we need to listen and believe them. We need to figure out how to support youth in creating lives that work for them. This is especially true for LGBTQ youth of color who are more likely to be engaged in survival sex, without a home, with limited or no economic options, and more likely to experience violence from systems they come into contact with.

This is why so many of the youth shared their stories. They want you to listen. They want to see change. And if you, the reader, listens, then we can begin to get them the things that they need and end the systematic violence that they experience. *By Mitchyll Mora originally published on Metro Trends February 26th, 2015*

MUGSHOTS, SEX OFFENDERS, AND PUBLIC SHAME

The photograph is an unreliable narrator telling us part of a story but giving us nothing close to the full picture," reads a recent article from Truthout by Charles Davis. This telling statement reaches beyond the mugshot to a troubling post-incarceration reality, the sex offender registry.

Policymakers control "what they have decided to include and chosen to leave out" and "invariably affects what we, the viewer, see." We do not know the whole story. There are some registrants that have committed serious crimes.

However, there are others who are actually innocent or convicted of non-sexual crimes. All it takes is one accusation for lives to be overturned. In actuality, the photograph could be worth a thousand meaningless words. Davis' article argues the use of mugshots leads to public shaming. Sex offender registries are echoic of the same logic used in this article.

As the article aptly states, "photos discourage empathy in favor of judgment." The registrant is somebody to someone; a son, daughter, husband, wife, father, and so on. Yet, the registry photo shrinks the offender to a moment in time. Their life experience is "reduced to criminal" and they become "fair game for abuse."

This abuse becomes more widespread with media pandering. Ironically, the Society for Professional Journalists cautions against "pandering to lurid curiosity," but that has been largely ignored in regards to sex offenders. The media fails to realize sex offenders are still human. Sex offenders are portrayed as evil, despicable, and all manner of negative adjectives. Interestingly enough, some of these former offenders are juveniles and others are implicated for non-sexual crimes. "The availability of these photos works against our ability to identify with the humanity of those who've been arrested." Quite simply there is no way to know who the offender actually is outside of their crime.

Furthermore, these photos create collateral consequences. Former offenders routinely have difficulty finding housing and employment. Oft times, the community may push them out. Moreover, there is the threat of vigilantism. Some experts argue that these consequences could increase recidivism. As Davis remarks, "posting their photos without any context but that provided by the state doesn't make us safer." If it doesn't make us safer, what is the point?

By David Booth originally published on The Center for Sexual Justice February 24, 2015

PRISON REFORM, PROPOSITION 47 AND THE CALIFORNIA SHELL GAME



The lieutenant who guides our university class visit seems to sense this, too. Despite his preliminary promises to us of remaining "politically correct," his contempt for these women is soon revealed - in stories of the closing of "unused" family visiting rooms to make way for a drug-sniffing dog kennel, in his celebration of an American sniper who surveyed all from a gun turret overlooking the solitary unit, in the unchecked assumption that every cry for assistance was thin cover for a scam. A loud speaker alert of an "unresponsive inmate down on the yard" was shrugged off with, "Well, somebody must not want to report to work today."

As we passed, groups of women shouted out their grievances to us, especially noting lack of adequate medical care. "Don't bother," The lieutenant sneered, and then alluded, in shorthand, to authorities from the capital who occasionally come to check prison compliance with any number of court-ordered reforms: "They aren't Sacramento."

But what would it matter if we were?

The Golden Gulag: Excessive, Unconstitutional and Entrenched

It is California - the Golden Gulag - that brings us the expansion of the modern prison industrial complex. California engineered a prison-building and filling project that is the "biggest in the history of the world." California's prison population is among the largest in the nation, with an annual budget of more than \$12.5 billion. This transformation took less than 30 years.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* offers the most comprehensive analysis of the rise of the PIC in California. Eschewing the usual simplistic explanations, Gilmore links the expansion to a complex interaction with a host of other developments: changes in the labor market; expectations of how state apparatuses will interact with the poor and those deemed "surplus labor"; what industries and economic growth systems government is prepared to subsidize; shifts in tax structures; and relationships between different races and classes over the decades.

Continued on Page 9

STRUGGLING FOR RIGHTS CONTINUED

Continued from Page 8... Beginning in the 1980s, public policy shifts, dictated by both economic factors and political mood, resulted in expansion of criminal law - 1,200 new criminal justice-related laws in the decades during the penal expansion - the first and most restrictive three strikes law, the proliferation of gang legislation. These were accompanied by a state-sponsored boom in prison building and new jobs in depressed agricultural regions, correctional spending that far outstripped educational investments, the growing influence of private correctional profit interests, and the escalating political power of the state's prison guards union, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), which plays a significant role in advocating pro-incarceration policies in California.

The result was a heavily crowded and racialized correctional population. In California, blacks are incarcerated at a rate 6.5 times greater than whites and Latino/as at nearly two times the rate of whites, rates higher than national patterns of racial disparity. Collectively, people of color comprise more than two-thirds of the state's outsized prison population. At the peak of overcrowding, the system was at 200 percent of capacity. Prisoners were triple bunked in gyms, hallways, any extra nook or cranny. This overcrowding was/still is especially excessive at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), the world's largest prison for women.

Nearly four years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that the California system was so overcrowded that it amounted to cruel and unusual punishment. The case, Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor of California, et al., Appellants v. Marciano Plata et al., centered on shortage of health care and de facto denial of mental and physical treatment. An average of one inmate per week was dying as a result of malpractice or neglect. The Supreme Court affirmed a federal decree requiring state officials to reduce the prison population (then 168,000) by 30,000, which is 137.5 percent of the system's capacity. California has until July 2016 to reduce population by another 10,000 prisoners.

One of the solutions, Assembly Bill 109, referred to as "prison realignment," primarily moves state prisoners into county jails. The overcrowding, then, is largely being shifted from the state to county level. Counties, already strained under a population of 80,000-plus, have a variety of options for dealing with these additional prisoners, including referrals to the new privatized profit-driven community correctional complex. The tendency, however, has been continued incarceration rather than release. Seventeen counties are already under separate court-orders to reduce populations, and the recent pressures have led many counties to build larger jails. Since jails are meant for short-term detention, their amenities, as it were, are even fewer than those offered in prison. So, statewide problems are simply exacerbated at the county level.

A second shell game used to reduce state prison numbers - on paper - is the increased use of out-of-state private prisons. Brown recently signed two separate deals with private prison providers CCA and GEO Group to house additional prisoners, making California one of the nation's leaders in its reliance on private prisons. In addition to the nearly 8,000 prisoners housed in out-of-state private facilities, new privatized prisons in California would accommodate another 4,000 prisoners, including 260 women at a new GEO prison in Bakersfield.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of this new privatization scheme is the collusion with old opponents. Previously, in California and elsewhere, private prison expansion has been stymied by correctional officers' unions that

resisted because of CCA and GEO's reliance on nonunion labor. But not anymore, since California's deal with the CCA and GEO Group requires the use of unionized California Correctional Peace Officers Association guards. Opponents of mass incarceration fear this partnership is a harbinger of additional expansion of the prison industrial complex.

It is within this context of resistance to decarceration and increasing entrenchment of private profit interests that we must evaluate the most recent efforts at "reform."

Propositions 36 and 47: The Promise and the Reality of Reform

California voters - for reasons both sociopolitical and fiscal – began to tire of endless incarceration before elected officials did and so sought change via ballot measures. While both Proposition 36 and 47 are widely touted as actually or potentially making a significant dent in California's prison population, at closer look, the impact may be other than hoped.

The Three Strikes Reform Act of 2012 (Proposition 36) rewrote the harsh 1994 law that mandated life imprisonment for a third felony conviction, even if the third strike was a nonviolent crime. Strongly supported by Democrats and liberal nonprofits, and opposed by the GOP and law enforcement/corrections lobbies, Prop 36 passed by a wide margin. Under the revisions, a life sentence for the third strike is available only if the crime is "serious or violent." Approximately 4,000 nonviolent third-strike lifers (out of nearly 9,000 sentenced under 1994 provisions) became eligible for resentencing. This is not automatic, but requires a legal process that grants release to eligible prisoners only after they are deemed no risk to "public safety."

Since passage, slightly over 2,000 prisoners have been released after legal review. This is certainly progress - and of immeasurable value to those released - but it has hardly produced a dent in California's bloated prison system. Beyond the first tier of cases, difficulties in obtaining further releases are related to scrutiny of prisoner's disciplinary records, prosecutorial resistance, and associated gaps between counties in considering release.

Most recently, California Proposition 47, the Reduced Penalties for Some Crimes Initiative, was passed by voters with a degree of "bipartisan" support. Referred to by supporters as the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, the bill reduced several theft and forgery crimes and possession of small amounts of most illegal drugs from felonies to misdemeanors. Prop 47 also allows for the retroactive resentencing of possibly 10,000 prisoners (including some Three-Strikers) serving time for offenses now reclassified as misdemeanors. One of the major selling points of the bill (and one of its potential perils) involves the establishment of a fund to allocate saved monies to reduce truancy, support trauma centers and provide mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Prop 47 was supported by the ACLU, NAACP, most labor unions, many prominent Democrats, and a host of Right on Crime associates. (This should raise eyebrows, since Right on Crime represents a distillation of right-wing thinking about reform: removing corporations from criminal scrutiny, promoting states' rights, and pushing an aggressive agenda of corrections privatization.) It was opposed by the California GOP, a few law and order Democrats, and the usual associations of sheriffs, police, prosecutors and crime victims - with the exception of the powerful California Corrections and Peace Officers Association, which along with Governor Brown and Attorney General Kamala Harris,

Continued on Page 10

BLACK AND PINK PRISONER TO PRISONER WRITING SURVEY Mail TO: Black & Pink - Feedback P2P Survey (Dorchester, MA 02125)

Errors were made when entering this question from pen pal forms. We are asking again, to make sure no one gets in trouble! We plan to send out lists soon.
Name, Number, and State: _____

Are you allowed to write to other prisoners? YES, I am allowed to write to other prisoners NO, I am not allowed
If YES, are there any restrictions placed on writing? _____

I give permission to send my bio, address, & details from my penpal form to other prisoners, except for restrictions listed above
ALSO! Do you use Corrlinks and seek penpals via Corrlinks (federal prisons only)? YES, I am interested in a penpal via Corrlinks NO

BLACK & PINK INCARCERATED FAMILY FEEDBACK! MAIL TO: Black & Pink - FEEDBACK (Dorchester, MA 02125)

rip slip here

How can we get important news about what is going on inside your prison out? Are you willing to send letters that tell us when someone has been abused, taken their life, or other important stories that need to be shared? If yes, how should we go about getting this information and sharing it with others?

Continued from Page 9 remained silent (This should raise more eyebrows still). The prominent progressive coalition Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) remained neutral as well, out of respect for the complexities of the question and the varying positions of coalition members. Several grassroots prison abolitionist groups, such as Justice Now and Critical Resistance, opposed the proposition, citing many of the reasons detailed below.

Despite the claim of reduced incarceration, several concerns have been raised regarding the ultimate impact of Prop 47 on California's carceral landscape. The promised savings of \$150-250 million are just that - promised but not guaranteed. Prop 47 was partly intended to reign in prosecutorial discretion by reclassifying many crimes known as "wobblers" (i.e. offenses that could be prosecuted as either felonies or misdemeanors). There is no indication that police or prosecutors, who have long relied on these laws as plea-bargaining and punishment tools, will not imagine new ways to overcharge defendants to achieve their desired result. Such approaches are already being considered.

Continued from Page 9...

There are preliminary signs, too, that, in yet another shell game, costs saved in felony prosecutions at the county level will be shifted down to the cities, which now face an additional influx of misdemeanor cases.

Even if there are savings, "justice reinvestment" here, as elsewhere, will not mean reinvestment in community, but instead, continued investment in law enforcement and corrections. Most of the purported savings will be funneled directly back into corrections, through a fund managed by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), known for expanded prison and jail construction under realignment. Given the current push toward privatization, it is easy to imagine new opportunities for profiteering under Prop 47, via contracts to provide mental health and mandatory substance use treatment and for case management of misdemeanants, now under community supervision.

It is important to note, as just one example, that Sentinel Offender Services, infamous for their (mis)handling of private probation in Georgia, is based in California. Sentinel is already under contract with several large California counties to provide GPS tracking and monitoring services for so-called community-based corrections. They have provided private probation services to Los Angeles County for more than 20 years. Prop 47 creates the possibility for still more clients.

One of the more troubling aspects of Prop 47 funding involves the 25 percent of "saved" monies that are earmarked for use by the Department of Education. While the pro-Prop 47 rhetoric suggested that educational benefits were central to the measure, the actual text specifies funding for grant programs that address "K-12 truancy, students at high-risk of dropping out, or school victims of crime." How does that translate? There is no guarantee that this might mean more social workers, teachers or restorative/transformative justice programming, and there are legitimate concerns that it could easily mean more police/Security Resource Officers (SROs) patrolling the hallways, more surveillance, more funneling of at-risk students into the school-to-prison pipeline. Eric A. Stanley, coeditor of Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex, suggests that if the funding choices favor police in the hallways "as a response to the infamous overcrowding of California's prisons, this is something we know would re-imprison 10,000 people, even if 10,000 people are released."

Finally, all efforts at reform, including Proposition 36 and 47 reify the law and order frame; they require our continued acceptance of and reliance on state violence. These reforms insist that we center "public safety" and fear of victimization by a dangerous, irredeemable class of law-breakers/prisoners. Proponents of both ballot measures promoted passage, as Cookie Conception, Justice Now board member and prisoner at Central California Women's Facility, points out in "The High Cost of Prop 47," by arguing to "stop the warehousing of petty, nonviolent criminals in prisons, while boasting to keep violent criminals locked up." Such rhetoric and resultant "reforms" insist that we distinguish between those who can be salvaged and those who we choose to consign to a perpetual cage.

Coda

In the fog of the yard at CCWF, one thing is crystal clear. Attempts at reforming the monstrous machine that is the PIC are futile. For more than 20 years, the state of California has deflected, coopted or subverted any legislative, voter-driven or judicial mandates for "prison reform."

A few examples: California passed SB 1399, legally allowing for compassionate release and medical parole, but five years later, continues to ignore the requisite paperwork as prisoners die behind bars. The state responded to a court case brought by prisoners over unhealthy food by routinely serving everyone a cold lunch of peanut butter and jelly on moldy bread, sour sunflower seeds and an old apple. The California Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (CDRC), in an attempt to quell a statewide prisoner hunger strike, claimed it would review demands regarding gang validation protocols and conditions of solidarity confinement; the result, a "reform" of procedures that actually expands the definitions of gang affiliation and increases use of solitary.

In response to a lawsuit requiring prison compliance with The Americans with Disability Act guidelines, various prisons across the state moved prisoners in need of said accommodations into isolation cells. In 2010, California created an Alternative Custody Program that allows nonviolent prisoners to complete sentences in community settings. In addition to sparking a new set of Federal court challenges for discriminating against men, the state has released women to these venues at a mere snail's pace. Instead, efforts are made to persuade eligible prisoners, like many at CCWF, to transfer to the new private prison because there are, in the words of The Lieutenant, "microwaves with toasters."

The prison industrial complex, in California and everywhere, is a profit-driven morass that swallows any efforts at reform and spits them back in expansion. There is no indication (and much to the contrary) that Propositions 36, 47, and the next or the one after that will fare much better than previous efforts. There is no escaping the classist and racist roots of this machinery, and every indication that "reforms" will, not only expand options for state control and private profit, but also simultaneously harden egregious race/class gaps. This cannot be "fixed"; it is feature not a bug. As Angela Davis rightly notes - in the book that poses the question, we must now grapple with, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* - "Our most difficult and urgent challenge to date is that of creatively exploring new terrains of justice where the prison no longer serves as our major anchor."

To paraphrase Justice Harry A. Blackmun, in that moment he finally saw the futility of death penalty reform, let us no longer tinker with this machinery of death. Let us seek another path.

By Kay Witlock and Nancy A. Heitzeg, originally published on Truthout Friday, 27 February 2015

"3 YEARS OF TORTURE IS ENOUGH": A TRANSGENDER PRISONER SUES GEORGIA PRISONS

In December 2013, Ashley Diamond, a transgender woman locked up at a men's state prison in Georgia, found herself in solitary confinement. Rutledge State Prison warden Shay Hatcher, she says, put her there for "pretending to be a woman." The 36-year-old Diamond, who was first diagnosed with gender dysphoria as a teenager, had been denied hormone therapy since entering the prison system in 2012. She still identified as a woman, even as her body was becoming more masculine, causing her extreme anxiety and physical pain.

Later that month, Diamond claims, Hatcher sent her to solitary for a second time after she met with lawyers. About six days later, still in isolation, Diamond told him that she was not pretending, but rather had serious medical needs requiring treatment—and that she was suicidal due to her lack of care. That same day, Diamond tried to cut off her penis with a razor and kill herself; she was hospitalized on an emergency basis. She then received a letter from the medical director of the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), saying that the officials who had confiscated her women's clothes and refused to provide her with hormone therapy had handled matters "appropriately."

Now, Diamond is taking her grievances to court. Earlier this month, the Southern Poverty Law Center initiated a lawsuit on her behalf that accuses eight current and former GDC employees of wrongfully denying her hormone therapy against the recommendations of doctors, and of failing to protect her from at least seven cases of sexual assault. Court documents, including copies of correspondences between Diamond and prison authorities, allege numerous incidents in which officials mistreated and outright harassed her. (The GDC declined to comment.)

Since stopping her hormone therapy, Diamond says she has experienced chest pain, muscle spasms, heart palpitations, vomiting, dizziness, hot flashes, and weight loss. Stephen Sloan, a GDC psychologist who met with Diamond in both December and January, noted that she is staying in a prison where the atmosphere is homophobic, with little support for sexual minorities. "She continues to require hormone therapy and gender role change if she is to receive adequate care," he wrote in a report after the second meeting. "Withholding this therapy from her increases her risk of self-harm."

As her body has transformed, Diamond has tried to kill herself at least three times and has tried to castrate herself four times, in addition to attempting to cut off her penis. She is seeking an injunction requiring the resumption of hormone therapy; the right to express her female identity through grooming, pronoun, and dress; and safe placement in a medium security or transitional facility. She secretly filmed a video statement from behind bars; here's what she had to say:

Transgender women inmates are among the most vulnerable in American prisons, facing a high risk of sexual violence and harassment from other inmates as well as staff, who often house them with men and refer to them with the wrong pronoun. One study in 2007 found that 59 percent of transgender women detained in men's facilities in California were sexually abused, compared with 4 percent of male inmates. Laverne Cox, the first openly transgender

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10 actress to be nominated for an Emmy, has helped bring broader attention to some of these issues with her role on as Sophia Burset, a trans inmate forced to stop estrogen therapy on the hit TV show Orange Is the New Black. And in a high-profile legal case earlier this month, Chelsea Manning (formerly Bradley Manning, the soldier who was convicted of sending classified documents to WikiLeaks) made national headlines when she received the go-ahead to begin hormone therapy in a military correctional facility after suing the government.

Federal prisons are required to provide inmates with individualized medical care, including hormone therapy, but at the state level it's a different story. While some states do require individualized medical care at prisons, others, like Georgia, have policies in place that specifically prevent transgender inmates from accessing treatment despite recommendations from medical professionals. (BuzzFeed's Jessica Testa has written at length about the state's treatment of trans inmates, including Diamond and Zahara Green.)

In April 2012, Diamond was imprisoned due to a parole violation for an earlier theft. She had been taking estrogen treatments, progestin creams, testosterone blockers, and anti-androgen medications for 17 years. Even so, prison authorities terminated her hormone therapy and assigned her to a close-security facility for adult male felons and other inmates with histories of assault and gang affiliation. Less than one month later, six gang members sexually assaulted her, according to court documents. After she complained, she says she was transferred in May 2012 to another close-security facility housing male felons, where she claims she was again sexually assaulted.

GDC mental-health staff evaluated Diamond and diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder. They also reaffirmed the diagnosis she had received as a teenager: that she had gender dysphoria, a serious medical condition listed in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. People with gender dysphoria experience severe distress due to a mismatch between their gender identity and biological sex, leading to feelings of "being trapped in the wrong body," according to Dr. Randi C. Ettner, a Chicago-based psychologist who helped write the internationally recognized guidelines for treating people with condition.

Noting Diamond's attempts at self-mutilation, GDC health staff recommended resuming hormone therapy, but prison officials ignored the advice on the grounds that it violated state policy. Georgia, along with some other states, has a "freeze frame policy" that allows state prisons to "maintain" an inmate's transgender status but not to "initiate" any treatment that moves them further along in their physical transformation. In Georgia's case, if prison medical staff do not diagnose someone with gender dysphoria and recommend hormone therapy immediately upon incarceration, the inmate cannot later begin treatment. During her intake processing, Diamond said she was transgender and had been taking hormone therapy, but prison medical staff did not evaluate her for gender dysphoria or recommended treatment until months later. At that point, prison officials said they could not initiate hormone therapy and could only offer mental-health counseling to help Diamond develop "better coping mechanisms."

"For many individuals with gender dysphoria, hormone therapy is effective, essential, and medically necessary treatment," Ettner wrote in a statement as part of the lawsuit. Without access to appropriate care, including hormone therapy and the right to wear clothing reflecting their identity, people with gender dysphoria are "often so desperate for relief" that they try to castrate themselves to eliminate the body's major source of testosterone.

When the recommendations to resume treatment were ignored, Diamond tried to kill herself in late February 2013. She was transferred once more, this time to the medium-security prison where she was placed in solitary confinement twice and tried to kill herself again. This led to another move, to a close-security prison where staff allegedly told her to "guard your booty" because they could not protect her, according to court documents. In January 2014, about a day after her arrival, another inmate allegedly assaulted her, and although Diamond reported the incident, prison staff continued to house her in a cell with her attacker. Over the next few months, she claims to have been assaulted at least three more times by other inmates.

Diamond also says she faced harassment from prison officials. One warden, Valdosta State Prison's Marty Allen, allegedly began referring to her as a "he-she-thing" and encouraged staff to ridicule her for acting like a woman. When Diamond petitioned for the right to shape her eyebrows, she claims staff said she was "clearly a man, not a woman," while the warden added, "There is no medically indicated reason for you to adorn your face by manipulating your eyebrows. This is a male facility and your gender is male. You will be required to follow the rules as all other inmates." She continued to attempt suicide and self-castration, until she was transferred back to one of the close-security facilities where she had previously been assaulted. She remains there, at Baldwin State Prison, where her lawyers say she still suffers from suicidal behavior and the compulsion to hurt herself on a daily basis. She is scheduled to remain in GDC custody for eight more years.

"The law is very clear that transgender inmates are entitled to receive medical-

ly necessary care, and the law is also clear that transgender inmates are entitled to safe and appropriate housing," Chinyere Ezie, the lead attorney on the case, told Mother Jones. She said the GDC's refusal to provide hormone therapy and protect Diamond from harm violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

Congress passed legislation in 2003 to address the problem of rape and sexual assault in jails and prisons, and national standards adopted later hold that agencies cannot assign a transgender inmate to male or female housing on the basis of "genital status"; they must consider on a case-by-case basis what's best for that inmate's health and safety, while giving serious consideration to his or her perceived views.

In a February letter to GDC Commissioner Brian Owens, requesting her transfer from Valdosta State Prison, Diamond wrote, "I am not trying to be difficult or make my way hard. I just want to do my time safely and go home." In her video statement, she added, "This is more than just about hormone care. This is about gross human rights violations. Three years of torture is enough."

By Samantha Michaels originally published on Mother Jones March 2, 2015

Gender 101

Gender Binary:
The categorization of gender into two distinct, opposite sexes.



Trans/Transgender:
An umbrella term applied to those whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.



Cisgender:
Someone who identifies exclusively as their sex assigned at birth.



Genderqueer:
A term applied to individuals who do not identify within the gender binary.



Transition:
The process of changing one's gender expression to match their gender identity.



t transstudent
f /transstudent
@transstudent

For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics

Design by Landyn Pan



Editor's note: The above image is a small list of words that people use to talk about their gender. Different people define each word in a different way, and it's always best to let others define themselves using the words they choose and use these definitions as guidelines.

APRIL 2015						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					4	1
					11	18
					10	17
					16	24
					9	23
					15	21
					22	29
					27	30
					28	
					26	
					19	
					13	
					6	
					7	
					14	
					20	
					21	
					28	
					27	
					29	
					26	
					27	
					28	
					29	
					30	

FREE PRINTABLE CALENDAR: www.printablecalendars.com

April Holidays: April Fool's Day - 1
Easter - 5
Earth Day - 22



The Power Words List

TERM DEFINITION

PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX	The shared web of interests of government, private business, and individuals that makes prison, surveillance & militarization an economic, social and politically driven industry.	Editor's note: This is the first page of of a resource from The Knotted Line curriculum that explores "exploring the historical relationship between freedom and confinement in the geographic area of the United States." The Power Words List also includes the following activity to encourage people to think about how power operates in their lives. Thinking about how power operates in our own lives can be difficult. If you choose to answer the questions, be gentle with yourself while you explore the answers:
PATRIARCHY	System where men hold power	
FEMINISM	Pushing for women's rights (equality, etc.)	
SEXISM	System of oppression based on sex and gender	
RACISM	System of oppression based on skin color and/or culture	
CLASSISM	System of oppression based on social class (rich and poor)	
IMMIGRATION	Leaving a home country to settle in another one	
SELF-DETERMINATION	The ability to make decisions for your own life	
RE-IMAGINATION	Imagining how something existing could be different	
SOVEREIGNTY	Supreme power or authority	WHAT IS POWER? Power is the ability to make action happen. Power can be negative or positive. Power is the ability to make action happen. Power appears in every level of human life: public, personal and internal. Power can be visible or hidden/invisible. Power is not just between people, there can be power in institutions, knowledge, customs or beliefs. Read through the list of "Power Words." These are words that describe different things having to do with how power works in our lives.
LIBERATION	The act of becoming free (meaning you were once unfree)	

THE KNOTTED LINE

Editor's note: This is the first page of of a resource from The Knotted Line curriculum that explores "exploring the historical relationship between freedom and confinement in the geographic area of the United States." The Power Words List also includes the following activity to encourage people to think about how power operates in their lives. Thinking about how power operates in our own lives can be difficult. If you choose to answer the questions, be gentle with yourself while you explore the answers:

WHAT IS POWER?

Power is the ability to make action happen.

Power can be negative or positive. Power is the ability to make action happen.

Power appears in every level of human life: public, personal and internal.

Power can be visible or hidden/invisible.

Power is not just between people, there can be power in institutions, knowledge, customs or beliefs.

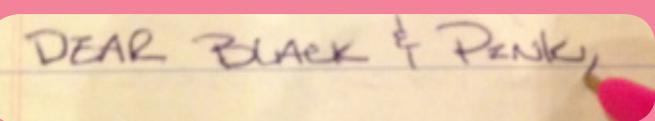
Read through the list of "Power Words." These are words that describe different things having to do with how power works in our lives.

1) Which of these words are you familiar with? Write those word the definition.

2 Are any of these words describing something that you experience or think is important in your own life?

ADDRESSES: PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESSES FOR MAIL!

Please Note: You can send multiple requests/topics in one envelope! Due to concerns about consent and confidentiality, you cannot sign up other people for the newspaper. However, we can accept requests from multiple people in the same envelope. There's no need to send separate requests in more than one envelope. If you are being released and would still like to receive a copy of the newspaper, please let us know the address we can send the newspaper to!

	Black & Pink - _____ 614 Columbia Rd Dorchester, MA 02125
If you would like to request:	Please write one or more of these topics in the top line of the address:
Newspaper Subscriptions, Pen-Pal Program, Address Change, Request Erotica, Religious Support & Volunteering (Send thank you cards to donors, etc.)	Black & Pink - General
Newspaper Submissions- Stories, Articles, Poems & Art	Black & Pink - Newspaper Submissions
Black & Pink Organization Feedback-- Especially the Slip on Page 9	Black & Pink - Feedback
Black and Pink Prisoner to Prisoner Correspondence Survey	Black & Pink - Feedback P2P Survey
Advocacy Requests- Include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help	Black & Pink - Advocacy
Submit to Erotica Zine	Black & Pink - HOT PINK
Stop Your Newspaper Subscription Black and Pink Hotline Number	Black & Pink – STOP Subscription 617.519.4387

Pen Pal Program: LGBTQ prisoners can list their information and short non-sexual ad on the internet where free world people can see it and decide to write. There will be a Pen-Pal Request Form in the Newspaper every 4 months.